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SOME ANOMALIES IN ORCHESTRAL ACCOMPANIMENTS TO CHURCH MUSIC

By ORLANDO A. MANSFIELD

TO the mind of every intelligent auditor of modern orchestral accompaniments the thought is almost certain to have occurred that these musical concomitants must have undergone various stages of development prior to arriving at their present degree of perfection. To pass in review the whole of these successive stages, steps, or strivings, would be impossible within limits approaching the reasonable. Consequently we are compelled to adopt a selective rather than an exhaustive method of examination, giving preference to such experiments or endeavours in the matter of orchestral accompaniments to church music as seem most at variance with present day systems or procedure. Our researches have also to be restricted in regard to time as well as manner, if they are to be described within the limits of a single paper and not those of a series of volumes. Hence, as instrumental music was largely the product of the Renaissance, the Reformation, and the Elizabethan age, we must confine our survey to periods posterior to the 16th century.

This limitation compels us to accept without discussion the statements of historians—inspired or otherwise—relative to the 4000 Levites appointed by David to praise the Lord “with instruments,” and to the 200,000 silver trumpets and 40,000 harps and psalteries instituted by Solomon (Josephus—Ant., bk. viii, ch. 3); although these were, without doubt, anomalous accompaniments to church music. In the early Christian church the music was entirely vocal, instruments being tabooed on account of their pagan associations. Hence the statement that about A. D. 200 a flute was used to accompany the vocal music at a celebration of the Lord’s Supper in an Alexandrian church must be regarded as a record of a most exceptional practice. To the church music of the Middle Ages the accompaniments were not contributed by an orchestra but by those “brethren of concordant spirit”—the *pulsatores organorum*—who, with the blows of their clenched fists upon the mediæval keyboard, hammered their way into musical history and heralded the race of noisy accompanists.

The credit of being "one of the first composers who introduced into his accompaniments to church music instrumental parts in unison with the voices" has been given to Ippolito Baccusi, Maestro di Cappella at Verona Cathedral in 1590. André Campra (1660-1744), sometime director of the music at Notre Dame, but who afterwards forsook the church for the stage, is said to have been the first French composer to attempt to combine orchestral instruments with the organ in choral accompaniments. In his setting of the 126th Psalm, "à grand chœur," there are parts for two oboes and a bassoon, these instruments being employed to duplicate the vocal parts and also to contribute occasional *obbligati* accompaniments. The title-page of the work directs that "*flûtes d'Allemagne*" may be substituted for the oboes. But the first attempt to accompany church music with stringed instruments only appears to have occurred in connection with the psalmody of the English Reformation—its executor being one Richard Allison, "Practitioner in the Art of Musicke," who, in 1599, published a psalter entitled "The Psalms of David in Meter, the plaine songe being the common tunne to be sung and plaide upon the Lute, Orpharyon, Citterne, or Base Violl, severally or altogether." In this work the lute part was written out in the tablature employed for that instrument, and was intended to be used only when the melody of the tune was sung alone. The orpharyon and citterne were instruments of the zither tribe, having metal strings played with a plectrum. The "Base Violl" was synonymous with the Viola da Gamba, the precursor of the modern violoncello. These instruments merely doubled the vocal parts.

The late Dr. E. G. Monk, sometime organist of York Minster, England, asserts that, prior to the so-called "Restoration," anthems, "when performed with any addition to the voices of the choir, were always accompanied by such bow instruments as then represented the infant orchestra. The stringed instrument parts were always in unison with the voices, and had no separate and independent function, except that of filling up the harmony during vocal 'rests,' or occasionally in a few measures of brief symphony." To this information Dr. Rimbault, the great English musical antiquarian, adds that pre-Restoration verse anthems were accompanied with viols, "the organ being only used in the full parts." But, as we shall see presently, there is some slight evidence that wind bands as well as stringed instruments found their way into the church accompaniments of the early Stuart period.

With the dissolute and debauched Charles II the severe style of the Elizabethan school found little favor. The so-called "Merrie Monarch," adding "glitter to corruption," gratified his secular tastes not only by the introduction of a lighter style of music but also by the employment of stringed instruments for the purposes of accompanying and for playing lively *ritornelli* and *intermezzi*. Thus Pepys, in his celebrated Diary, under date of September 14, 1662, writes: "This is the first day of having vialles and other instruments to play a symphony between every verse of the anthems." Then, on Christmas Day of the same year, our garrulous friend says, "The sermon done, a good anthem followed with vialls." Additional evidence on this point, as well as an implication of the use of wood-wind accompaniments to church music prior to this period, is afforded by Evelyn who, in his Diary, under date of December 21, 1663, says, "Instead of the ancient, grave, and solemn wind music accompanying the organ, there was introduced a concert of twenty-four violins between every pause, after the French fantastical light way, better suiting a tavern or playhouse than a church." These "twenty-four violins" constituted Charles's attempt at an imitation of the "vingt-quatre violons" of the days of Louis XIII and "le Grand Monarque," with whose strains, as played at all court dances and dinners, the English King had become familiar in the days of his exile, and whose existence suggested the

"Four and twenty fiddlers,
All in a row"

of the well-known nursery rhyme. In fine, as Mr. Myles B. Foster writes, "In place of simple vocal counterpoint, of which the accompaniment, a scarcely necessary adjunct, was but the facsimile, there were gradually introduced the Verse and Solo anthems, with their independent symphonies and ritornellos, often graced (as the King fancied) or more possibly disgraced, with twiddles and turns enough to upset the reverence of the music, and mar the serious character of the words."

In his Chandos Anthems, written during 1718 to 1720, for services at the chapel of the Duke of Chandos, near London, Handel employed the organ and strings, with one oboe, one bassoon, and sometimes two flutes, his Chandos Te Deum having a trumpet part. His stringed orchestra probably suffered from local limitations, as it had no violins; but his treatment of the remaining instruments was often highly original. Thus, in "As

pants the hart," the tenor part is assigned to the 'cellos, the bassoon reinforcing the double-basses in the eight-foot octave as in modern scores. A solo, "Tears are my daily food," from the same work, is accompanied by oboe, bassoon, and organ; while in a duet from the anthem "My song shall be alway," a three-part harmony is formed by violins in unison for the upper part, 'cellos and bassoon in unison for the middle part, and the double-bass (with the organ supplying the eight-foot pitch) for the lowest part. Another solo from "Let God arise" is similarly treated but with the addition of an oboe solo making four-part harmony.

The scores of Bach's Cantatas afford numerous examples of the employment of obsolete stringed instruments as well as wind and brass. Amongst the strings are the violino piccolo, a small violin tuned a minor 3rd higher than the modern instrument, the viola d'amore, a variety of tenor with "sympathetic strings" of fine brass or steel wire in addition to the ordinary gut strings; the six-stringed Viola da Gamba, already mentioned; and, besides the lute, the violoncello piccolo, an instrument of the same shape and pitch as the modern 'cello but of smaller size and thinner stringing. The obbligato to the solo, "Mein gläubiges Herz," was marked for the violoncello piccolo; and, though now played by the modern 'cello, was probably intended for the Viola da Gamba.

In regard to the treatment and combination of stringed instruments Bach's Cantatas present some unusually interesting features. Thus, in the Easter Cantata, "Der Himmel lacht," we have parts for 2 violins, 2 violas, 2 'cellos, double-bass and organ, combined with 3 oboes, a tenor oboe (called "taille"), a bassoon, 3 trumpets, and drums. Again, in "Gleich wie der Regen," we have no violins but, instead, 4 violas—the first and second parts of which are doubled by 2 flutes in the octave above—a bassoon, organ, and basses. Lastly, in "Gottes Zeit," we find 2 flutes and 2 Violas da Gamba, with basses and organ, imparting, as Spitta says, "a muffled and dreamy effect," the Cantata being an *in memoriam* work for some one now unknown.

The only example we have of the employment of a monochord as an accompaniment to church music is afforded us in the case of that ancient instrument the tromba marina, or marine trumpet, so called "on account of its external resemblance to the large speaking trumpet used on board Italian vessels." The instrument has a head like that of a violin, with a neck joined to a long resonant box, the whole being about six feet in length. Its one string, generally tuned to CC, rests on a bridge, one end of which

is rigid, the other being free and visibly vibrating something like an organ reed. The string is bowed with a heavy 'cello bow; but, instead of being stopped, is played in harmonics produced by touching the string lightly with the thumb of the left hand at certain places indicated on the finger-board. The tone thus produced is powerful, but harsh and nasal; while that produced by ordinary stopping has been described as "less melodious than the bray of an ass." It was, however, sufficiently popular to receive notice in Molière's "*Bourgeois Gentilhomme*" (1670), to be described in detail in Mersennus's "*Harmonie Universelle*" (1636), and to be mentioned by Leopold Mozart in his *Violin School* (1756). It is now entirely obsolete; but in church music it was at one time extensively used to accompany the plain song in some of the German nunneries, probably on account of its supposed German origin. On festival occasions it is said that the nuns have been known to "jubilate" on three or four of these instruments with drums in addition!

Amongst the wood-wind instruments which have contributed to the anomalous in church music accompaniments, a prominent position should be assigned to the cornet, cornetto, or zinke, an instrument not to be confused with the modern cornet, but a kind of flute with a tone larger and coarser than that of the oboe. The instrument consisted of a straight or curved wooden tube covered with leather, pierced with holes for the fingers, and blown through a cupped mouthpiece similar to that of the trumpet. Its compass was a complete chromatic scale of over two octaves, from fiddle or gamut G upwards, but the difficulty experienced in playing the instrument was the chief factor in the decline of its popularity. Concerning its tone, which appears to have blended well with the brass, Artusi, an able Italian musician, writing in 1600, compared it to "the brightness of a sunbeam piercing the darkness, when one hears it among the voices in cathedrals, churches, or chapels"; while Mersennus, as quoted by Sir John Hawkins, declares that the sounds of the cornet are vehement, but that those who are skilful are able so to soften and modulate them that nothing can be more sweet. A larger and coarser toned cornet was often played in Germany from watch-towers as a fire-alarm or war signal. Hence the satirical appellation, "*Stadtkalb*" or "*Town calf*."

In church music, however, the cornet was generally used to strengthen the treble part. Thus Hawkins, speaking of the condition of cathedral services after the "Restoration," says that "to such streights were they driven, that for a twelvemonth. . .

the clergy were forced to supply the want of boys by cornets, and men who had feigned voices." But this use of the cornet in the church was not a novelty, as Stow, in his "Annals," speaks of "sundry anthems sung with organ, cornets, sackbuts, and other excellent instruments of music" at the Chapel Royal in the Jacobean age; while Brookbank, in his pamphlet "The well tuned organ" (1660), relates that Charles I, when at Oxford, "had service at the cathedral with organs, sackbuts, recorders, cornets, etc." This quotation confirms the implication of Evelyn in regard to the employment of other than stringed accompaniments to church music in pre-Restoration times. In passing we may observe that the recorder was a variety of the flute-à-bec with a compass of two octaves from middle F upwards, and the sackbut the old English name for the trombone or double trumpet. Randolph or Randall Jewett, Jewitt, or Jewit (1603-1675), in whose days orthography was by no means an exact science but more or less of a lost art, was organist of Christ Church and St. Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin, from 1631 to 1639. Incidentally we note that he was afterwards organist of Chester Cathedral, and, finally, of Winchester, where he died and was succeeded by John Reading, the alleged composer of "Adeste Fideles" and the actual author of "Dulce Domum." Jewett had introduced orchestral accompaniments into the services of the Irish Church prior to the Commonwealth, since the "rather puritanically inclined Bishop Bedell" describes a service at Christ Church as being "attended and celebrated with all manner of instrumental musick, as organs, sackbutts, cornetts, violls, etc., as if it had been at the dedication of Nebuchadnezzar's golden image in the plain of Dura." That Jewitt really employed wind instruments in his pre-Restoration performances is proved by the fact that in 1637 the cathedral authorities issued an act or ordinance directing the proctor to pay "to the two sackbutts and two cornetts for their service and attendance in the Cathedrall the sume of twenty nobles eache at or before Easter next ensuing."

In the continuation of the passage from Evelyn, from and to which quotations and allusions have been and will be made, the diarist complains that "now we no more hear the cornet which gave life to the organ; that instrument quite left off in which the English were so skilful." This, written in 1663, was the first mention of the decline of cornet playing. It was followed in the next century by statements far more explicit. In Germany the instrument had been used with the brass to play chorals from the church towers; but Mattheson, in 1739, regrets that

"the fine Zinken and trombones which formerly were considered to be of one family. . . are now seemingly banished from our churches, especially the Zinke which, in spite of its harshness, is so penetrating." Schubart, an erratic German composer and writer, who died in 1797, says of that time that "a good player on the Zinke can now only be found in Germany, and even there . . . but very few are left."

In some of his church cantatas Bach uses the cornet to strengthen the melody or to play in combination with the trombones in chorals. Professor Prout states that the only independent parts written for the instrument are in the cantatas "Es ist nichts gesundes" and "O Jesu Christ, mein Leben's Licht." In the former work a choral is announced by flutes, cornets, and three trombones; while in the latter work we have Bach's only attempt at accompanying a whole work by wind instruments. These, in addition to cornets, are three trombones and two Litui, presumably a type of natural horns or trumpets (Latin *lituus*, a long trumpet curved at the end). Spitta thinks that this cantata, dating about 1737, was "probably performed in the open air at a funeral ceremony."

Concerning an anthem, or hymn, written for a festival service of the Knights of the Garter, at Windsor, England, shortly after the "Restoration," by Captain Cooke, the choirmaster of the Chapel Royal, Anthony Wood says that it was accompanied by "two double sackbuts and two double courtals placed at convenient distances amongst the classes of the gentlemen of both choirs, to the end that all might distinctly hear, and consequently keep together both in time and tune." This courtal was an obsolete type of bassoon, called in French *courtant* on account of its shortness. Phillips, as quoted by Hawkins, gives it as curtail, "a bass to the hautboy."

The natural bass to the cornet was provided by a wind instrument generally made of nut wood covered with leather, and called the serpent on account of its shape which has been described as three "U-shaped turns followed by a circular convolution," the whole being about 8 feet in length. It dates from about 1600; and, played through a cup-shaped mouthpiece, was pierced with six holes and furnished with several keys. Its compass was about $2\frac{1}{2}$ octaves, from BBB; its chief defect being its uncertainty and inequality of production. Concerning its tone opinions vary. Mersennus declared that it was "strong enough to drown twenty robust voices," and yet capable of being "attempered to the softness of the sweetest voice." Berlioz, however, described its

tone as "essentially barbarous"; but Lichenthal (1826), in his *Dizionario della Musica*, speaks highly of the instrument; while a modern English writer describes its tone as being less blatant than the brass and more "tender and veiled" than the tone of the ophicleide or "chromatic bullock," by whose "bellowing tones" it was at first superseded. With this latter opinion the writer of this article (who has both seen, heard, handled, and blown the instrument) most cordially agrees.

In the French churches the serpent was formerly used to support the voices of the officiating clergy in their intonings of the plain song, the "serpent d'église" being a recognized (and, let us hope, a duly salaried) functionary. Thus Mendelssohn, writing from Paris, in 1832, says, "I have just come from St. Sulpice. . . The effect of the *canto fermo* accompanied by a serpent, those who have not heard it could scarcely conceive." In the rustic churches of our grandparents the serpent played an important part. It often formed the only bass of the country orchestra, and any attempt on the part of meddlesome church officials to oust it from its place in church or *al fresco* performances frequently resulted in a serious ecclesiastical division or secession.

Wagner has introduced the serpent into his "Liebesmahl der Apostel," and Mendelssohn's employment of the instrument in St. Paul, and of its superseder, the ophicleide, in "Elijah," are facts familiar to all orchestral students. As a proof of the complete desuetude of the instrument we may mention that when some few years ago Professor Prout was arranging for a performance of "St. Paul" in London, England, he could not find a single serpentist amongst the numberless orchestral players of that huge city. Perhaps the name of the instrument had something to do with its decline. To call a man a serpentist is not pretty; to allude to him as a serpent is a very doubtful and double-edged compliment; while to describe him as "that old serpent" is highly calculated to set in motion the machinery of legal action.

Bach does not appear to have used the serpent; but he has atoned for this neglect by the introduction into his scores of the flute-à-bec, the precursor of the modern flute; the oboe d'amore, a 3rd lower in pitch than the modern oboe; and the oboe di caccia, a kind of bassoon, a 4th higher than the modern instrument. In the Pastoral Symphony from his Christmas Oratorio, Bach employs *inter alia*, two oboi d'amore and two oboi di caccia. His employment of the "taille" or tenor oboe has already been noticed.

Peculiarities in the accompaniment of church music by brass instruments are not so numerous as in the case of the strings or

even of the wood-wind. Bach, however, in the initial and final choruses of his cantata "Schauet doch und sehet," writes Tromba and Corno "da tirarsi," the latter instrument being used again in the cantata "Halt im Gedächtniss Jesum Christ." These horns and trumpets were undoubtedly furnished with slides, thus producing a complete chromatic scale. The treatment of the trumpet by both Bach and Handel is so familiar as to require no detailed description here. As a typical case from Handel we may point to the Dettingen Te Deum in which are employed three trumpets, one of which was termed "principale" and resembled in tone and treatment the modern trumpet, while the remaining two were termed "Clarini I and II" and appear to have been smaller in size and tone and to have had assigned to them florid passages in the upper registers. Haydn employs three trumpets in his Imperial Mass; while Henry Purcell "the introducer of a new and more effective employment of the orchestra in accompaniment" has scored his Te Deum and Jubilate in D (probably the first English Service to be furnished with orchestral accompaniments) for four trumpets and strings. To Bach's employment of the "Litui" attention has already been directed.

As might be expected from its antiquity, its sonority, and its possible purity of intonation, the trombone, or sackbut, has often been the recipient of anomalous treatment in accompaniments to church music. Earlier than the instances of its combination with the zinken, to which allusion has already been made, comes the example of the celebrated Giovanni Gabrieli (1557-1613), sometime organist of St. Mark's, Venice, who, in his motet for two choirs, "In excelsis benedicite Domine," employed one violin, two trombones, and three cornets (Zinken); while his "Surrexit Christus" was scored for three voices, two violin parts, two cornets and four trombones. Ludovico Viadana (*circa* 1560-1640) is credited with having accompanied his tenor solo, "Bone Jesu," with nothing more or less than a couple of trombones which we can only hope were skilfully played. Monteverdi, in 1631, introduced trombones into some movements of a mass he wrote for St. Mark's, Venice, to commemorate the cessation of the plague. The reinforcement of the choral or *canto fermo* by the trumpet or trombone was a common procedure with Bach; and to-day the German choral is often given out, or strengthened, by a trio or quartet of trombones, or even played by a "Posaunenchor" from a church tower on the mornings of great festivals. The English Birmingham Festival of 1823 was

remarkable for "the introduction of *nine* trombones in addition to the organ at the church service."

At the funeral of that great English statesman, the Right Honourable William Ewart Gladstone, in Westminster Abbey, May 28, 1898, there were performed (we believe for the first time in England) Beethoven's three Equali for four trombones, the trombones and drums uniting with the organ at various points during the service. The four trombone players—two altos, a tenor and a bass—were stationed in the chantry of Henry V, above the high altar. Says a writer who was present, "The hushed stillness which pervaded the noble fane was broken with indescribable tenderness as the sustained chord of D minor fell upon the ears of the great congregation in tones of weird simplicity and exquisite pathos." At the memorial service for King Edward VII, held in the same building, on May 20, 1910, the Equali were again played, and on both occasions musicians agreed that there was nothing more impressive. The Equali were written in the autumn of 1812, at the request of the choirmaster of Linz cathedral for something for trombones to be performed on All Souls' Day. They were rendered with words added by Seyfried, at Beethoven's funeral; and, in this form, were published by Haslinger, in 1827. It was not until 1888 that they were issued by Breitkopf and Haertel in their original form. Their use at Mr. Gladstone's funeral was due to the action of Mr. George Case, the alto of the London Trombone Quartet, by whom they were played on that occasion. Their employment at state funeral ceremonies seems now to be fairly well established.

That noted English musical scientist, the late Dr. Stone, relates that being "requested to lead the singing in the open air at the laying of the foundation stone of a church" he used a quartet consisting of a slide trumpet, alto and tenor trombones, with euphonium and contrafagotto in octaves for the positive bass." He declares that "with good playing" the result was "striking and, perhaps, deserving of imitation." The use of the modern cornet to merely reinforce the melody of hymn tunes is a vulgar expedient only mentioned here to be condemned. In many English churches there is a tendency to employ modern cornets, saxhorns, euphoniums, and other valve instruments, not in preference to trumpets, horns, and trombones, but because the former classes of instruments are more readily obtainable. Yet even amongst the available orchestral material it is perhaps to be regretted that more serious efforts are not made to introduce more variety into orchestral accompaniments to church music.

Some of these attempts would probably end in failure, but there is a greater probability that in the making of an effort to avoid monotony we might produce some combination likely to be permanently useful. It was this striving after variety that first produced the orchestral combinations now regarded as classical. As Herrick says, or sings:

“Thus times do shift; each thing his turne does hold;
New things succeed, as former things grow old.”